

both served in the U.S. Navy and that both had an experience with exposure to hazardous and toxic materials. He said he didn't believe that either one of them suffered any major health issues from their exposure. It caused me to think that this is a veteran who is not necessarily going to care about this legislation, but what he said was that it was a concern that there would not be any help from the VA if they did, and they lived in fear and uncertainty.

The veteran who didn't think he or she had any negative consequences from exposure to toxic substances still worried about "What would happen if I did? What would happen if my health deteriorates" and worried that the VA would not be there for them or their families.

After hearing the news of our comprehensive toxic exposure bill, this veteran said:

You have now changed that for thousands of veterans and their families.

The uncertainty, the fear is diminished and maybe gone.

It is time to advance this legislation and bring us one step closer to connecting all generations of toxic-exposed veterans with the care they need and deserve and to provide veterans with certainty and support.

I honor, I thank, I have great gratitude for every generation of veterans, and in my family's lifetime, those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are among the most significant to us. But Vietnam is a part of my life as a 16-year-old boy, a junior in high school. In fact, if you were a senior in my high school—my high school of 71 kids in my class, so I know them all—if you were just a year older than me, you served in Vietnam. And I saw how they were treated when they returned from their service, and they were treated terribly by fellow American citizens.

As a 16-year-old kid, I told myself, I am going to do everything I can to honor and respect those who serve, see if I can compensate for the circumstances these people—many of whom I knew personally—can I compensate for what they are experiencing today in the early 1970s and the midseventies?

I never expected to be a Member of the U.S. Senate. Nothing in my life would suggest that that would be the case—the grace of God, the kindness of Kansans. But upon my arrival in Congress, in the House and now the Senate, it became important for me to do something more than just honor and respect veterans, to do something more than saying "thank you," to do the things that I can do as a Member of a legislative body to make certain that the Department of Veterans Affairs does its job but most importantly, that I as a Member of Congress do mine.

It is important for us to pay respect, but it is also perhaps even more important for us to make certain those who serve our Nation receive the care and benefits that they are entitled to and that they deserve. It is beyond just

saying "thank you"; it is saying "thank you" by action.

It is time to advance this legislation and bring us one step closer to connecting all generations to the circumstances that war brought to them and their families. And I hope that after Memorial Day, we brought back with us as we return this Monday—Memorial Day being a week ago today—that we brought back with us a sense of what their sacrifice means and commit to living our lives and doing our jobs worthy of their sacrifice.

Decade after decade, service men and women have deployed to countries around the globe in defense of freedom, and we have seen just within the last year that there is no moment in which everyone is safe. There is no moment in which we may not have to ask people to continue to serve, to serve longer, or to begin their service in defense of freedom in the United States and freedom around the world.

Unfortunately, throughout history, many of them were exposed to harmful toxins during that service that resulted in life-altering health conditions.

Too many veterans—far too many veterans—face too many battles when they return home and are seeking the care and benefits they desperately need. Our veterans deserve better, and they are tired of waiting for solutions.

This week, this body—the U.S. Senate—will discuss the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Act at great length, and I look forward to speaking more about this historic legislation on the Senate floor and with my colleagues so that we can deliver to all generations of toxic-exposed veterans the relief, the assistance, and maybe, yes, just the lack of fear, the lack of uncertainty that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I want to concur in the remarks just expressed by my colleague, and we do honor our veterans. And Senator MORAN serves as our ranking member at the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and we appreciate his leadership, as we all seek to honor that service and to fulfill the obligation that this great Nation has made to our veterans who don't shrink from service, who don't pass the blame. They get up every day and they execute on their mission, and I think it is important for each and every one of us to remember that our service should do honor to the service and the sacrifice that they have made.

#### INFLATION

Madam President, for about the past year, our current President, President Biden, and many of the Democrats in the House and the Senate—where the Democrats are in charge of each of those Chambers—they have spent a great deal of time blaming everyone but themselves for the historic levels of inflation that have ruined the economy and made the American people very nervous about what two more

years of this "Build Back Broke" agenda would mean for them.

I have said before that Tennesseans feel like they have no idea who is in control in this country, over in the White House, or, indeed, if anyone over at the White House is in control in this country.

And if you look at all the various characters featured in Biden's inflation blame game, you might be tempted to think that Biden himself is wondering the very same thing: Who is in control? Who is calling the shots?

But the truth is that no one in the White House is confused or shocked by how bad things have gotten. They know exactly how we got here because they did it because every step they took along the way was a deliberate attempt to reject common sense and manipulate the people into accepting a radical economic agenda.

Well, in July of last year, President Biden insisted that inflation was "transitory" and that if we could just bring on a little bit more time and a little bit more effort and hang in there a little bit longer, you know what, everything was going to be just fine.

He didn't want the people to panic and start questioning the narrative that the White House was pushing forward every single day.

Surprising no one, that argument didn't fly. The people weren't buying it. So in October, suddenly, not only was inflation a problem, but, guess what, it was former President Trump's fault. That is right—not this administration's fault, not the Democrats', not President Biden, it was President Trump's fault.

Well, the American people, they weren't having that either. They weren't buying that line, and over the next 5 months, the COVID-19 pandemic, so-called global challenges, supply chain, and, of course, Vladimir Putin, and then Senate Republicans—everybody took a turn in the blame game seat for President Biden and the White House. It was everybody's fault but theirs.

Isn't that absolutely amazing? Just amazing. The people in control of everything—the House, the Senate, the executive branch, the White House, controlling it all—they had nothing to do with this, they want you to believe.

Well, yes, indeed, they had everything to do with it.

So last month, the Democrats had exhausted this rotation of villains, as they like to call it. Well, they panicked and they decided, once again, that they had to just go out here and convince the American people that, yes, indeed, inflation was transitory. It was going to be short-lived. It was only 8½ percent, they would say—only.

But go fill up the car. Go to the grocery store. You know they are wrong.

Well, unfortunately for Joe Biden, the American people are much smarter and more in tune with day-to-day life than the left has given them credit for.

This administration is now in damage control mode.

Last week, Secretary Yellen threw up her hands and admitted that the political narrative on inflation that she enabled put us on the road to economic collapse.

On the same day, President Biden published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, blaming Trump and Putin for his problems before touting the same radical policies the American people have already rejected.

What we are seeing now is more than just the consequences of a failed political maneuver. It is the collapse of an economic philosophy the Democrats insisted was far superior to anything their political opponents would ever come up with.

And the Democrats' response to this is what, exactly? To say, well, they are sorry. Then they just double down. They just keep on going. Not exactly a plot twist for this administration. They intend to double down on their failed policies.

At this point in Biden's blame game, Tennesseans are accustomed to watching the administration fail, but that doesn't mean that they are not paying attention to the details and the steps this administration is taking.

Tennesseans are nervous, stressed out. They feel like everything is out of control and nobody in the White House really cares about it.

As I have been out, about, and around the State, inflation, the price at the pump, the price at the grocery store, the cost of fertilizers for our farm community, logistics costs, the cost of clothing, the cost of shoes and equipment for the kids to go to summer camp, fees at summer camp—everything is going up. Everything.

And who do people blame for this? They blame this administration. They know that in June of 2020, a gallon of gas was \$2.17. This week in Tennessee, that gallon of gas is \$4.47. That is far more than 8 percent inflation. Coffee is up 143 percent. Ground beef is up, buns are up, eggs are up, bread is up. Everybody is complaining about what it costs to live every single day.

The playbook really is pretty simple on this. What this administration is doing is just putting it all on our debt line. But you know what, the American people know they can't afford this, and they know that their children cannot afford this. They know that the programs that this administration is pushing—big, expensive programs—the regulations that they are putting in place—primarily, of the 69 regulations that President Biden has enacted since he took office—69 regulations he has done—the majority of those are aimed at the energy sector. People know that it is all taxpayer money this administration is spending, and the taxpayers cannot afford this out-of-control spending spree, and they know that they cannot afford this far-left socialistic turn in this administration and in the policies of my Democratic colleagues.

Now, why is this? It is because the Democrats' vision for the future isn't

compatible with what families want for their future. They look at what Joe Biden is offering—more government control, less parental control; more government control, hardship on small businesses; more government control, less freedom to spend your hard-earned money—and they are saying: This is not what we want.

So I think that when I listen to Tennesseans and when I talk with them about their hopes and dreams about what they want to see for the future, for their children, they are not in a jovial mood. They are in a very serious mood. They are confused that this administration and Democrats would go this far left and risk—and risk—good will. And I think that the American people have figured out we are completely on the wrong track with this administration's policies, and they have figured out that these policies are not a path to prosperity. They are a path to government control, and I think that many of my Democratic colleagues know and realize that. Certainly, Secretary Yellen has let us know that she realizes that, and probably the President knows it. But instead of saying: Stop—full stop—the Democrats have chosen to double down.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 477, Alex Wagner, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

Charles E. Schumer, Tina Smith, Margaret Wood Hassan, Mark Kelly, Richard J. Durbin, Benjamin L. Cardin, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Angus S. King, Jr., Patrick J. Leahy, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Gary C. Peters, Chris Van Hollen, Edward J. Markey, Jeanne Shaheen, Jack Reed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Alex Wagner, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) would have voted "yea."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 69, nays 17, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 213 Ex.]

#### YEAS—69

Baldwin	Graham	Reed
Bennet	Grassley	Romney
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rosen
Blunt	Heinrich	Rounds
Booker	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Boozman	Hirono	Sasse
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Burr	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Capito	Kelly	Shelby
Carper	King	Sinema
Casey	Klobuchar	Smith
Cassidy	Leahy	Stabenow
Collins	Lujan	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Thune
Cornyn	Markey	Tillis
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Tuberville
Cramer	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Moran	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Feinstein	Murray	Whitehouse
Fischer	Peters	Wicker
Gillibrand	Portman	Wyden

#### NAYS—17

Barrasso	Daines	Lummis
Blackburn	Ernst	Marshall
Braun	Hagerty	Paul
Cotton	Hawley	Risch
Crapo	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Lee	

#### NOT VOTING—14

Cardin	Murkowski	Sullivan
Hoeven	Ossoff	Toomey
Kennedy	Padilla	Warnock
Lankford	Rubio	Young
Merkley	Schumer	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 69, the nays are 17.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Colorado.

#### SOLAR TARIFFS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am grateful to be recognized, especially with the Presiding Officer in the Chair for the beginning of this talk, because I just wanted to come out here and mention that the last time I spoke on the floor, I spoke about the Department of Commerce's investigation on solar tariffs and the ways in which it was destroying Colorado's solar industry.